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all equally to be received and equally regarded as a basis on which a dogmatic theological system may be founded. But it does not destroy the doctrine that the Scriptures contain the true revelation of God, and of his dealings with mankind. It does not destroy the conception which has been handed down to us of the religious history of the world ; that God chose out first a family, and then a nation, to be the depository of the truth on which he designed to build his Church ; that men learned, as well by his precepts as by their disobedience of them, their weakness and his strength ; that the meaning of those precepts, through the teaching of a series of inspired men, became even clearer as the time for the fulfilment of the promise drew nigh, until at last Christ came to ransom men from the power of the evil one, to breathe his Spirit into mankind, and to bring them into fellowship with one another by reason of the inward union of each individual with each Person of the Blessed Trinity which had become possible through his Divine humanity. This larger, wider conception of the function of the Scriptures will be as vast a help to the theology of the future as its absence has been a hindrance to the theology of the past."

The Longevity of the Patriarchs. Prof. H. E. Ryle, writing in the *Expository Times* upon the subject, declines the literal view commonly held, that these individuals lived the large number of years assigned to them in the early chapters of Genesis, for these reasons : (1) physiologists have not been able to show that man's physical vitality, in the infancy of the race, was greater than it has been in later times. (2) The analogy of savage tribes, in a stage of primitive barbarism, does not favor the theory of prolonged life in pre-civilized times. (3) There is nothing in the earliest Assyrian or Egyptian inscriptions from which we should infer that in the Abrahamic centuries a longer duration of life was enjoyed. (4) The literal acceptance of this extended span of life confronts us with fresh difficulties in the matter of the age of the Patriarchs at the time when their earliest children were born to them. (5) Even these large figures fail to bridge the interval which the researches of natural science require us to interpose between the first appearance of man and even the earliest records, going back to 4,000 B. C. It seems more candid and natural, he says, to admit that Israelite tradition, like the traditions of other races, in dealing with personages living in prehistoric times, assigned to them an abnormally protracted period of life. Hebrew literature does not in this respect differ from other literature. It preserves the prehistoric traditions. The study of science precludes the possibility of such figures being literally correct. The comparative study of literature leads us to expect exaggerated statements in any work incorporating the primitive traditions of a people. It is worth while observing that, as the narrative passes from the stage of prehistoric tradition to that of national memoirs, the span of life is reduced from that of fabulous length to that of normal duration. The antediluvian Patriarchs are accredited with lives from 700 to 960 years ; the post-diluvians with 200 to 600 years ; the Israelite Patriarchs with 100 to 200 years ; and in the days of the Israelite monarchy the length of life was the same as now (cf. *Psa.* 90 : 10).

"The Sons of God and the Daughters of Men." In the same article Professor Ryle discusses the much mooted passage, *Gen.* 6 : 1-8. He considers it an extract from some very ancient source, and a plain, straightforward

narrative in which no ground is offered for any but a simple and literal interpretation. Setting aside the hypothesis which makes the verses contain an allusion to the disastrous results of the intermarriage between the descendants of Seth and the descendants of Cain, as also the hypothesis which identifies the "sons of God" with the men of the upper classes and the "daughters of men" with women of inferior station, he believes the passage to refer to an illicit union of angels with men. The common signification of the expression 'Sons of God' is that of angels, cf. Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7; Psa. 29:1; 89:6; 'Dan. 3:25. It is not to be understood that there was actually such an event, but rather that the narrative here given is the relic of an early Hebrew legend. There is considerable probability that vv. 1-3 epitomise a parallel or alternative version of the Fall. The temptation here comes from beings of a higher race; the entrance of sin and death is ascribed to the abandonment by the daughters of men of the position which God had allotted to them. Here, as in Gen. 3, the woman as the weaker vessel yields to the temptation, and is the cause of sin and death prevailing among mankind. Thus was the origin of evil accounted for. It was not unnatural that later tradition derived from these verses the idea of the fall of the angels from their first estate. The passage is colored by primitive theology; nor is this any loss. We are enabled thereby to see the method of the compiler. For while, as a rule, in the early chapters of Genesis the more distinctly mythological elements are removed from the narratives by the scrupulous care of the Israelite writer, traces of their original shape and coloring are occasionally to be seen; but perhaps nowhere else does this appear as distinctly as in this short section.